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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 RIO DE JANEIRO 000353

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT PARA.2 AND PARA.6)

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SUBJECT: A VISIT TO A PACIFIED FAVELA

REF: a) RIO 346, b) RIO 329

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11. (SBU) Summary: On 16 October 2009 Principal Officer and consulate officers joined Rio State Secretary of Security Beltrame and police officials for a visit to Dona Marta, the first favela formally considered "pacified" under the state government's Favela Pacification Program (ref b). Along with Dona Marta, four other favelas are considered pacified at present. Rio police entered the Dona Marta favela in December 2008, pushing out drug gang members who had dominated the area, establishing community policing and introducing public utilities and other services into the community. Dona Marta now appears generally calm and secure, with a permanent Pacification Police Unit (UPP) presence in place, but Beltrame said additional services and assistance to the favela's population needed to consolidate gains are lagging. The experience with Dona Marta seems encouraging thus far, but also points up, per comment below, some lessons going forward: i.e., that favelas will have distinctive characteristics that must be taken into account, that there is a pressing need for additional civilian agency and NGO support for the FPP, and that the momentum crucial for the FPP's success over time will require, in Beltrame's own assessment, successful pacification of 30-40 favelas (out of more than 1,000 in Rio) where gang dominance and violence are most severe. End summary.

12. (SBU) On 16 October, one day before an outbreak of widespread drug gang violence in Rio's northern zone (ref a), Principal Officer, accompanied by Rio State Security Secretary Jose Mariano Beltrame and by state police and consulate officers, visited Dona Marta (aka Santa Marta), the first Rio favela to be formally considered "pacified" under the state government's Favela Pacification Program (ref b). Four other favelas are currently considered pacified, i.e., mostly free of gang activity and with the population accessible for city services and social assistance. Home to an estimated 15,000 persons, the Dona Marta favela climbs a steep hill directly above the Botafogo area of the city's affluent South Zone. It is a maze of improvised brick and plywood dwellings, spread along twisting, narrow paths (recently improved with concrete surfaces). The favela fits within a relatively compact space bordered by two walls that separate the favela from an ecological preserve. A funicular-type street car on a track runs along one side of the favela. The Dona Marta favela was occupied by authorities under the FPP plan in December 2008, and Beltrame explained that state authorities had followed closely the FPP model in entering Dona Marta. (Comment. This approach is reminiscent of "clear, hold and build" in U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine, as discussed in ref b. End comment.) After Beltrame personally visited the favela to advise residents that the police "were coming in and coming to stay," state military police, spearheaded by the Special Operations Battalion (BOPE), entered Dona Marta in late 2008, resulting in some confrontations (accounts of the level of violence vary) with local elements of the major Rio drug gang Commando Vermelho (Red Command) which controlled the area. Most gang members ultimately fled, and the gang leader who had ruled the favela for

many years was arrested and transferred to a maximum security prison. His house - situated on commanding high ground in the favela - has been turned into a police observation post.

13. (SBU) Within a month from the initial police invasion, Dona Marta was free of gang dominance, Beltrame said. State authorities established a Police Pacification Unit (UPP) station in an abandoned crhche building at the summit of the favela, with 120 UPP police officers full time (2x 12-hour shifts) in the favela. The UPP policemen are specially trained in the community policing techniques that, under the plan's doctrine, are intended to win the trust of the local population and increase their access to civil services and governance (ref b). Utilities companies brought regular electrical power and sanitary plumbing to the favela for the first time, and Dona Marta residents willingly paid the new utilities bills, since a documented history of paid city services can enable favela residents to claim legal title to the property on which their makeshift dwellings are built, Beltrame explained. Beltrame lamented, however, that other services and projects that needed to come into the favela quickly to consolidate hope for a better future within the population were not materializing rapidly enough. He stressed both civilian agencies in the state government and civil society groups needed to be more directly and broadly engaged in the FPP; "the police cannot do it all," he added.

14. (SBU) Walking through Dona Marta with Beltrame and the UPP station commander, a female military police captain who appeared to be a beloved figure to many of the favela's children, PO noted a general sense of calm (many favela residents were away at jobs during the weekday morning, and mainly children, young mothers and elderly persons were in evidence). Starting at the UPP station, PO saw police volunteers giving classes in karate to several children and adolescents from the community, and also coaching soccer on a field built by the police next to the station. In a grim reminder of life in Dona Marta before pacification, one wall of the former crhche-turned-UPP station was pockmarked with gun shots - Beltrame indicated it had been an execution site used by favela criminals.

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The UPP station also had a small operations center, with TV screens showing images from surveillance cameras posted throughout the favela. Beltrame pointed out to PO several spots where traffickers had controlled access throughout the favela, and indicating the choke points and gang fighting positions had been mapped out by police in advance of the invasion. A young boy from the neighborhood acted as guide to lead PO and the group to a rough patio overlooking Rio - a location that is Dona Marta's claim to fame, the site of the filming of a famous Michael Jackson music video from the 1990s. Beltrame said that persistent rumor in the favela indicated Jackson's production group paid local traffickers to assure security for the video's production.

15. (SBU) Near the base of Dona Marta, Beltrame and PO waited for the funicular cable car that serves three stops along the favela's steep incline. A large group of print and media reporters interviewed PO and Beltrame, indicating the high degree of interest in the FPP - and the way it is being perceived abroad - in the Rio public. Leaving the favela and entering the first paved street at the foot of the Dona Marta hill in Botafogo (favela residents call the regular neighborhoods of the city "the asphalt"), Beltrame pointed out several snack stalls along the street that appeared to have closed down. He said those small businesses had catered to Rio residents - many from the middle class - who had driven the street at night, seeking to buy cocaine from Dona Marta's gang dealers. Those small-scale merchants had actually protested to police that the pacification of the favela had been bad for their business, adding their complaints, Beltrame mused, to others doubtless expressed by the drug gang's customers, who had lost the "drive through" cocaine purchase venue afforded by Dona Marta's proximity to Botafogo's busy streets. As Beltrame and PO prepared to depart, the president of the favela residents association approached and told Beltrame that "things are going well" and, despite some "specific problems" (NFI), the community is optimistic and will continue to cooperate with authorities.

16. (SBU) Comment: Dona Marta is receiving a lot of attention as the

test case for the FPP, and a bellwether of whether this new strategic approach can actually create conditions for fundamentally altering Rio's abysmally violent environment for the better. That may be more scrutiny than the relatively small community spreading on a hill above Botafogo can justify in terms of drawing clear and persuasive conclusions, but the experience of the FPP in Dona Marta in its initial seems encouraging. The visit to the favela reinforced a number of observations on favelas and the FPP approach:

--Every favela will be distinctive: Dona Marta is the FPP prototype, but its relatively small size, terrain features and other social aspects make it a somewhat easier proposition than many other favelas, such as the Morro dos Maccacos, where the police helicopter was shot down (ref a), or the massive Complexo de Alemão, which is a veritable fortress of the senior leaders of the Comando Vermelho. Successful pacification of Complexo de Alemão will be iconic for the city's effort to reclaim the favelas, but also likely will be "traumatic" in terms of the scale of violence, according to Beltrame (ref b), perhaps resembling the battles in Fallujah more than a conventional urban police operation. Other favelas will be nearly as hard. Political leaders will have to prepare Rio - and Brazil - for that reality.

--Police are not enough: The FPP strategy contemplates police pushing traffickers out, securing favelas and winning their residents' confidence with the UPP. However, it was never envisaged in the plan that police would also be the primary, long-term arbiters for provision of city services to residents, and main providers of volunteers for social action projects. Yet that is what is happening, according to Beltrame, as civilian government agencies and NGOs have yet to fall in on the FPP doctrine in any organized and robust fashion. In Dona Marta, with the exception of a few tutors and computer instructors who volunteered individually, police officers are doing everything from assisting residents with requests for utilities to coaching sports. There is no cadre of civilian government and NGO personnel to handle those tasks, nor evidence of systematic programming for additional services (beyond basic light and water) on the horizon. If such a vacuum persists, it will wear down police capacity and lead to frustration among residents in pacified favelas, threatening the initial gains in those areas.

--Momentum is crucial: The past week in Rio is an example of how events - especially sudden and violent ones - can derail best-laid plans for the FPP's progression. Whatever next steps were planned under the FPP, the entire machinery of Rio's security structure was suddenly deployed in dragnet actions against favelas thought to house the leaders of the attack against the police helicopter, which captured national and world attention. The gunmen get a vote, and outlasting and besting them will require a combination of persistence and tactical patience - a willingness to adjust and even delay action at times -- while remaining committed to the strategic

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plan. Beltrame seems aware of this, and will also pick and chose his fights. Rio has an estimated 1,000 favelas encompassing approximately 3 million people, but Beltrame cautiously believes he can achieve strong momentum if he can pacify between 30-40 favelas with the largest concentrations of criminal activity over the next two or so years.

17. (SBU) While much of the current international attention on Rio stems from the Rio's selection to host the Olympics in 2016 and the recent spectacular violence that closely followed the Olympics announcement, most Rio residents see the issue in even more profound terms. As Rio Governor Sergio Cabral noted recently, Brazil has a track record for successfully securing major athletic events, but the greater challenge for Rio is to create a permanent change in the city, addressing the favelas and the profound social problems they present with a comprehensive and sustained strategy that can fundamentally alter the security environment, economy and quality of the life in the city for the long term.

HEARNE